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KISWAHILI IN THE LANGUAGE ECOLOGY OF GULU, NORTHERN UGANDA

STEFFEN LORENZ

The promotion of Kiswahili is one of the main goals of the policies of the East African Community. However, only a limited amount of research has been conducted on the perception and application of the language outside of the traditionally Kiswahili-speaking countries of Tanzania and Kenya. Especially in Uganda, the third largest country of the region, there is a lack of understanding for the role of the language in public communication. This article presents data on the use of Kiswahili in everyday communication and discusses the language attitudes and language ideologies of the people in Northern Uganda's largest city. It shows that, despite generally positive attitudes towards the language, there is little to no use for it in public communication. The results of the study, combined with perceived negative attitudes from other parts of the country towards the implemented policies, question the effectiveness of the proposed measures for promoting Kiswahili within the present parameters of the specific context's language ecologies, as well as the country in general.

1. Introduction

In light of the strengthening of the East African Community as a political and economic union and the ongoing process of East African Integration, Kiswahili has, over the last years, become a focal point in educational policies all across the region. Used as the community's second common language behind English, its promotion is a key part of the attempt to bring the people of the region together and harmonize business practices across the national borders. Since 2005, following an amendment to the Ugandan constitution, Kiswahili, or Swahili as it is referred to in the document, is the country's second official language (The Republic of Uganda 2006). With this amendment, it followed its eastern and southern neighbours, Kenya and Tanzania, in recognising the importance of the language as a lingua franca amongst an extremely diverse cultural and lingual context.

However, to many this is far from the effort required to establish the language in the linguistic practices of Ugandans. Kawoja & Makokha (2009), for instance, demanded that, beyond the creation of the East Africa Kiswahili Council, there is a need for the installation of regional institutions tasked with the promotion of Kiswahili in East Africa; especially in the media sector (p. 28). Others like Mukhuturia (2006) viewed the business sphere as the key to strengthening the role of Kiswahili; suggesting that multi-national corporations, which operate across the borders of the East African Community, should adopt the language for improved communication. Probably the greatest attention is directed towards the educational sector, where Kiswahili is to receive a more prominent role. The idea behind this decision is

to promote the process of Eastern African Integration and further establish the East African Community, which besides Uganda includes the countries Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and its newest member South Sudan. As English, the official language of the EAC, is not well established in some member states like Burundi (official language is French), as well as large parts of Rwanda, South Sudan and Tanzania. Kiswahili is now being pencilled in to fill the gaps of the current official language policy (East African Legislative Assembly 2016).

Largely missing from the discussion so far is a consideration of the role that Kiswahili actually plays in these countries and, with regards to Uganda, whether the implemented policies and proposed actions are likely to succeed in improving its role and status within the country's current language ecologies. In many cases, the analysis of the role that Kiswahili has in Uganda is mixed up with advocacy for the language's development and promotion in general. It seems that many authors, especially from Kenya and Tanzania, wish for policy makers and socio-economic stakeholders to put a greater emphasis on the expansion of Kiswahili in all aspects of life in Uganda. The aforementioned Mukuthuria (2006) writes that "[t]here is no doubt that the Kiswahili language will witness rapid development in Uganda this century unlike in the last three centuries", and further elaborates that the "[t]ime has come for Ugandans to overstep tribal polemics in search of higher morals in order to forge ahead with national development issues. It is with this ray of hope that Kiswahili growth and development in this country banks its future to enhance its roles in Uganda" (*ibid.*: 163-164).

This example details the apparent combination of scientific and political interest in the topic. In some cases, it even appears that this form of advocacy leads authors to analyse and infer without empirical evidence, impeding the strength of their conclusions. Along with this, the existing studies on the attitudes towards and use of Kiswahili mostly focus on regions where it is already well established. Research in more peripheral parts of the Kiswahili-speaking area, like the study by Nassenstein (2017) on Kiswahili in the north-western Ugandan town Arua, are still somewhat rare and often only give accounts of the linguistic properties of certain Kiswahili dialects, without much analysis of their sociolinguistic context. Other studies discussing the Kiswahili spoken in parts of Uganda like Myers-Scotton (1979) or Miner (2002) generally lack a deeper analysis of sociolinguistic factors.

Regardless of one's position towards the role of Kiswahili in Uganda, any attempts to further establish the language require a deeper understanding of the way in which the language is currently used by individuals and why it does not hold the same position in Ugandan society as it does in Kenya and Tanzania. Therefore, this article explores the role of Kiswahili in Gulu, Northern Uganda; an environment that is not in the region directly neighbouring Kenya and thus is not directly affected by the other country's language ecology through trade or migration, but which was nonetheless in the past considered to be a Kiswahili-speaking region. It further contributes to the topic of Kiswahili in the "periphery"

alongside the work by Karangwa (1995) for Rwanda or by Bose on the Kivu region and Kaji on eastern Congo (both this volume).

2. The historic role of Kiswahili in Uganda

Previously a minority language spoken along the coastlines of present-day Tanzania and Kenya, Kiswahili was throughout the 19th and 20th century transformed into the main lingua franca of East Africa. Even though the language ecologies of the countries in the so-called “heartlands” of East Africa are sometimes portrayed as a commonly shared trait (Isingoma 2017: 449), based on some similarities regarding the roles of English, Kiswahili and various local languages, there are significant differences between the language ecologies of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. The similarities that lead to this assessment of a somewhat uniform language ecology have grown from the countries’ shared histories as parts of the British Empire, the use of Kiswahili in the colonial administration and the introduction of English as the language of education during that time. However, the existing differences make such a uniform conceptualisation appear rather questionable. For instance, English appears to have a bigger role in Ugandan society than in Kenya and especially Tanzania. Another main difference seems to be the prominent position of local languages in Uganda, which may pose a significant challenge to the establishment of Kiswahili in a role that is more alike to the one it holds in Kenya or Tanzania.

One of the main talking points when discussing Kiswahili in Uganda is its complex relationship with the language Luganda. Coined as the “Luganda-Swahili controversy” by Pawliková-Vilhanová (1996), the issue dates back to the introduction of Kiswahili during the colonial period. At the time, the leaders of the Buganda ethnic group, who had positioned themselves prominently within the colonial apparatus, were fighting for Luganda to become the language for interethnic communication outside the British administration. This was a struggle against the introduction and implementation of Kiswahili, which held position in the other East African colonies of the British Empire. In the end, at the beginning of the 20th century, the colonial administration decided that Kiswahili would nonetheless attain the official status; in part to avoid possible conflicts based on promoting just one of the many minority languages in the country. Kiswahili was especially important for interethnic communication in the military, where it had already been used by the British colonial army in Kenya and Tanzania. The legacy of this military use can still be seen today as the policy was continued following the independence of Uganda. However, the knowledge and literature regarding the role that Kiswahili has played outside of the military remains very limited. This problematic issue, already recognized by Mazrui & Mazrui (1993) but not fully materialized until recently due to the ongoing internal conflicts of the 1990s and early 2000s, has become highly topical:

(...) the return to civilian politics in the 1980s, while expanding the arena of popular participation, reduced Kiswahili's role in the national political life of the country. The restriction of the military to barracks also reduced Kiswahili's contact with society at large (...). The question which remains is whether, when Uganda returns to civilian rule, Kiswahili's role in national life will be allowed to expand. The current constitutional debates in Uganda seem to suggest that such a development is unlikely. Part of the explanation lies in the power politics between Kiswahili, a lingua franca, Luganda, an ethnic language, and English, the imperial language. Kiswahili has a place in national policy in East Africa partly. (Mazrui & Mazrui 1993: 281)

3. The study

Northern Uganda is certainly one of the more interesting regions in the ongoing discussion of the role of Kiswahili in Uganda. Due to the historically high number of people from Northern Uganda in the military, including people from the Acholi region, the language was rather widespread. As the families of soldiers lived on military compounds, the language policy of the military equally affected the extended family members, who would use Kiswahili in the interethnic communication of these generally multiethnic and multilingual places. When Idi Amin declared Kiswahili to be the country's national language in 1973, it was mainly those from Northern Uganda who supported this decision (Mazrui & Mazrui 1995: 74)

However, the National Resistance Movement's seizure of power following the so-called Ugandan Bush War, which ended the short presidency of the ethnic Acholi Tito Okello in 1986, resulted in a break of the close ties between the Acholi and the Ugandan military (Amone 2014: 141). Considering that these developments are more than thirty years in the past, the claim that Kiswahili is being used as the primary language for interethnic communication in this region needs revisiting. With the improving access to education and the resulting steady increase in literacy (generally referring to English literacy), as well as the rise of global media and socio-economic developments that lead to steady urbanization and increased mobility, the positioning of Kiswahili as the *de facto* lingua franca of Northern Uganda seems questionable today.

The data sets for this paper were collected as part of a doctoral dissertation on language choices and attitudes in Gulu between 2014 and 2016 (Lorenz 2019). The questions focused on contextual language use, as well as on language attitudes in the community. The questionnaires were distributed to members of the urban community in Gulu using a nonprobability sampling approach, as a statistically significant sample size because a randomized sampling was considered unachievable and not in the interest of the study as a whole. Thus, the data was combined with a qualitative approach using qualitative interviews and participant observation over the course of two years. The participants were chosen to

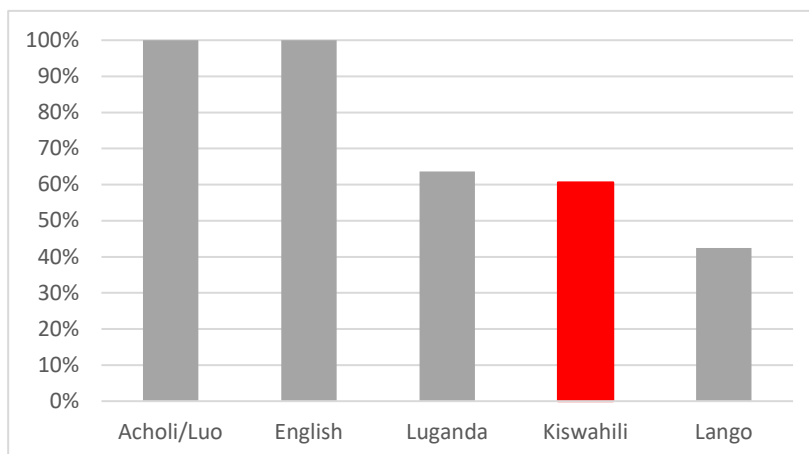
ensure that different social groups within the urban community were represented instead of observing a single rather homogenous group of people.

Overall, 41 participants (24=m, 17=f), who all lived in Gulu, took part in the study. Their average age was 25.9 years with a standard deviation (SD) of 7.0. This average age is exactly ten years older than the average age of Uganda according to the national census from 2014 (The Republic of Uganda 2016). Of the 41 participants, 32 were ethnic Acholi, while the remaining came from other parts of the country. The sample had a clear bias towards people with higher levels of education, as 16 had attended University and six had completed a degree at a vocational institute. Of the other 19 participants, 12 had attended secondary school (either ordinary level or advanced level) and only 7 had not received education beyond primary level. However, the relatively high average age and the comparably high levels of education coincide with data from the national census; which found that over 60% of people living in the Gulu municipality have completed at least secondary education and showed that, in comparison to other areas of the district, a larger part of the population were 18 or older (The Republic of Uganda 2016: 115). The participants also worked in a variety of fields; from IT-specialists to vendors at the local markets. About two thirds of the sample group estimated their monthly income to be below 200,000 UGX, or roughly \$70 US in 2015.

4. Kiswahili as part of language repertoires

The first and foremost question to ask, when assessing the role of a language that is considered a lingua franca in a certain area, is how many people are capable of understanding and speaking the language. In trying to assess the overall language ecology of the town, the study explored the language repertoires of the participants; studying every language that they, through self-assessment, possessed any form of competence in. They were therefore asked to list any language that they were able to understand and speak, even to a very limited extent.

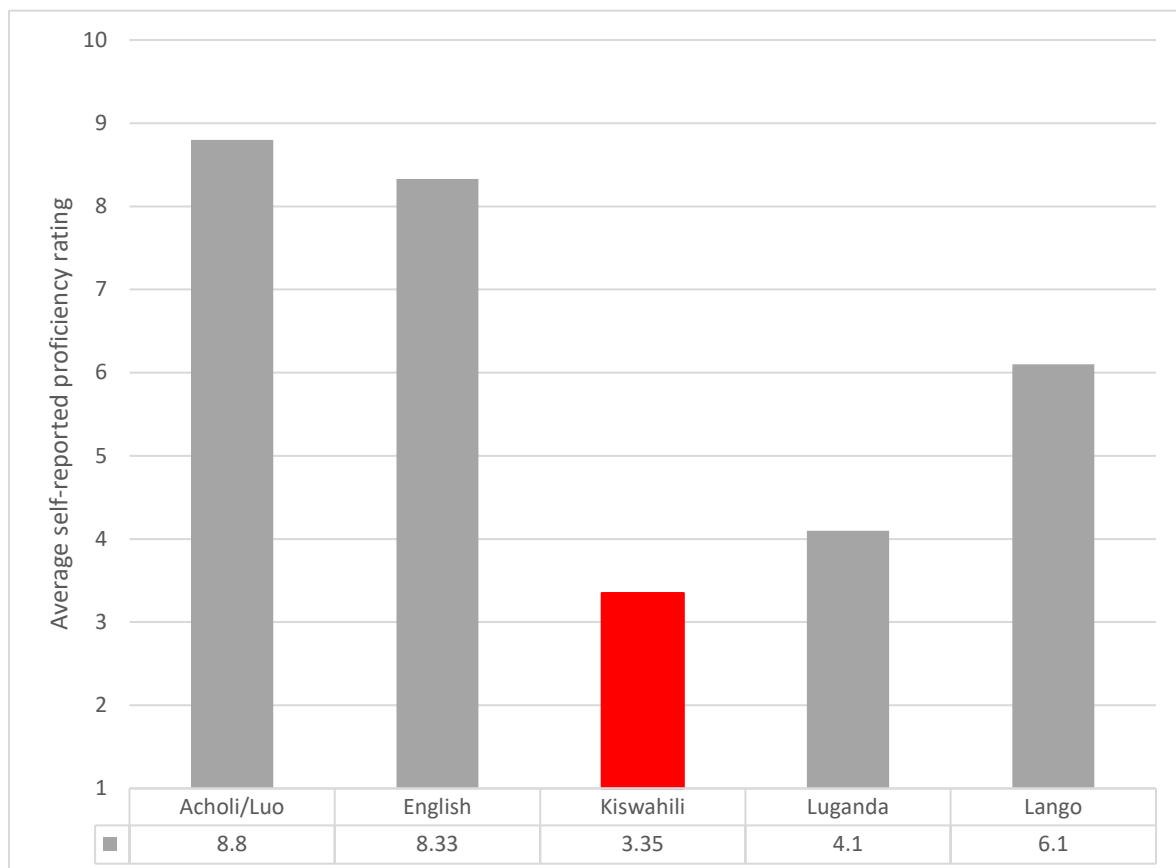
Figure 1: Five most listed languages (n=33)



As expected, a considerable number of participants included Kiswahili in their self-reported language repertoires. However, whereas every participant included both Acholi and English in their language repertoires, Kiswahili was only listed by around 60% of the participants and even Luganda was also listed more frequently. The naming or omission of Kiswahili did not appear to carry an age-demographic component, as there was no significant difference between younger and older participants. Luganda, on the other hand, showed a slight difference in the average age of those who listed it as part of their repertoire versus those who did not. Here, participants who listed Luganda were on average 23.6 years old, whereas those who did not were on average 29.9 years old.

The participants were further asked to rate their own competence, as it is important to not only know how many have any knowledge of Kiswahili, but also to know to what degree they are capable of performing in conversations. They were asked to rate their perception of their ability to understand and speak the languages they had listed; ranging from only a few words to a fluent, first language speaker level.

Figure 2: Self-assessed proficiency rating per language on average (1 to 10; n=33)



Among the five most listed languages as part of the participants' repertoires, Kiswahili received the lowest competency rating on average. On a scale from 1 to 10, on average the participants rated their own ability as only 3.35. This rating is significantly lower than the self-assessments given for their competence in English and even lower than the mean rating for Luganda.

The answers to both questions show that even though Kiswahili is spoken by a significant number of people, in this case more than half of the participants, it seems unlikely that it is used as a *lingua franca* in this area. As all the participants claimed knowledge in English, it seems likely that this is generally the language used for interethnic communication, not Kiswahili. Furthermore, the spread of Luganda, in this sample's case often due to prior residencies in Kampala (usually for educational reasons) decreases the likelihood of Kiswahili being used as a secondary *lingua franca*. This leaves the question of the basis behind this decrease in importance. An assumption, which is seen with a large degree of credibility, is that the rise of negative attitudes towards Kiswahili have led to a disinterest in learning it.

5. Attitudes towards Kiswahili

According to Mazrui & Mazrui (1995) attitudes towards Kiswahili in Northern Uganda during the 1970s, were rather positive. However, during the civil war beginning in the mid 1980s, negative experiences associated with the military, which is generally viewed as a Kiswahili-speaking organisation, possibly generated and increased negative attitudes towards this. To address the question of whether such attitudes exist on a larger scale and therefore influence the role that Kiswahili plays in this area, we can observe another section of the study. It contained two questions; asking where and to what extent Kiswahili should play a role.

5.1 Kiswahili as an official language

The process to decide which languages were to receive the status of an official language of Uganda has historically been rather controversial. As a 'neutral' language, English was generally viewed as the ideal choice in this linguistically highly diverse country; with no language coming close to representing a majority of the people. As discussed above, Kiswahili is, since 2006, recognised as the second official language of Uganda. In many ways, this decision has fueled the ever-lingering debate of whether to include the indigenous languages of Uganda into the group of official languages; especially concerning Luganda (cf. New Vision 2012, Ssentanda & Nakayiza 2015). Adopting Kiswahili and leaving the other languages out was also not universally welcomed due to the language being connected to violence and exploitation; not only by the British colonisers, but also Arab slave traders and members of the military. To gain an understanding of the position of the people from the

Acholi region on this topic, the participants were asked to list the languages they thought should be the official languages of Uganda. They had the opportunity to list as many languages as they liked and gave the following answers.

Table 1: Preferred official languages (Uganda)

Language	Percentage of participants
English	94.7%
Kiswahili	86.8%
Acholi	36.8%
Luganda	26.3%

Among the participants, English was almost unanimously chosen as one of the official languages, while Kiswahili was named only slightly less frequently. Local or regional languages on the other hand were named considerably less. Acholi was listed by fewer than half of the participants and Luganda was generally only listed in combination with Acholi. In this specific context, the participants did not display any negative attitudes towards Kiswahili and its position as one of the official languages. The study also showed that for many Acholi, Kiswahili is clearly preferred as an official language over Luganda, which was usually only listed in combination with Acholi; arguably, this can be interpreted that Kiswahili, much like English, was perceived as a neutral language in this context. However, this still left the question open of how Kiswahili was viewed in a more general sense and whether negative attitudes could be observed outside the context of official languages.

5.2 General attitudes

In order to approximate the attitudes that individuals held towards certain languages, in this case towards Kiswahili, the study directly approached the question of language attitudes. Using an adapted Likert scale from one to nine, the participants were asked to rate their opinions on a set of languages from very negative (one) to very positive (nine), with (five) representing neutral.

Table 2: Average attitude scores by language

Language	Mean rating
English	8.6
Acholi	8.2
Kiswahili	6.5
Luganda	5.7

The answers showed English as the most popular language among the participants of this study. The mean rating of Acholi was slightly below that of English, a result that was lowered by the opinions of the participants with ethnic backgrounds other than Acholi. Kiswahili received a considerably lower score than English but was nonetheless viewed more favourably than Luganda.

Other languages that were tested received considerably lower ratings, including Runyankore (3.08); the native language of Uganda's president Yoweri Museveni. Within the sample, Luganda was the only language where the rating correlated with the age of the participants, as it received its lowest ratings among the older participants (>35). In correlation, many of the participants with very positive attitudes towards Luganda had the common experience of spending parts of their educational career, either for school or at university, in the country's capital Kampala where Luganda is the main indigenous language. Regarding Kiswahili, no such tendencies were visible within the data-set.

The results of both these questions revealed an overall positive attitude towards Kiswahili among the participants. Its inclusion in the Ugandan constitution as the second official language was questioned by only few of the participants and it received a positive mean attitude score; rating lower than English and the local language, Acholi, but higher than Luganda and other indigenous languages.

6. Kiswahili in everyday contexts

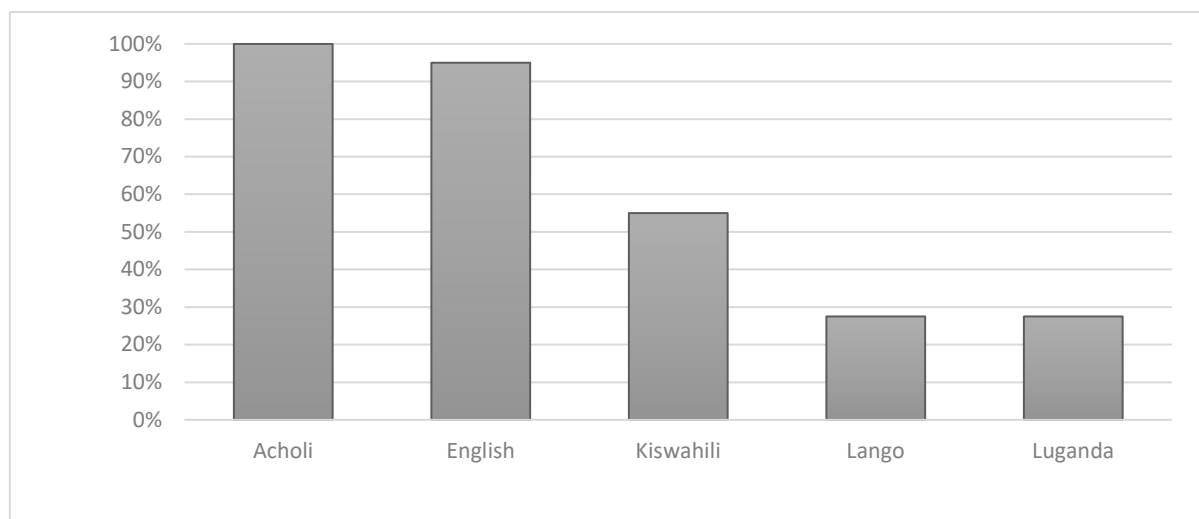
Having seen that the attitudes held towards Kiswahili were generally rather positive, the question remains why the number of people who claimed competence in it was comparably low and why their self-reported proficiency was rather poor. To further assess this question, it seems necessary to inquire about the role that Kiswahili has in everyday communication.

Within the study this topic was addressed through three different approaches: The first was concerned with the question of which languages were generally perceived to be important in everyday communication; the second one further inquired into which languages were used in specific contexts of everyday communication; and the third approach dealt with the role of language in the consumption of various media types.

6.1 Perceived importance of Kiswahili in everyday communication

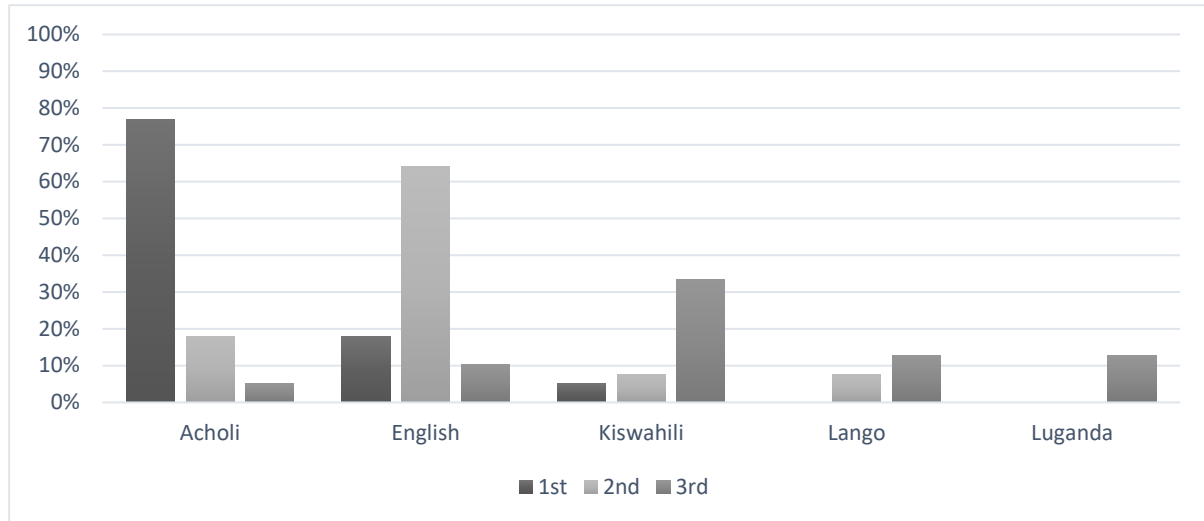
Knowledge of Acholi was much less common among immigrants from the central or southern region (including students and people working at the market or in office jobs) and people from other countries (coming as refugees, traders, migrants, workers in development projects or researchers, like myself). Therefore, the study asked firstly which languages the respondents thought were important to be able to speak in Gulu, and how they would rank these languages according to their importance.

Figure 4: Languages one should be able to speak in Gulu (n=40)



All respondents listed Acholi as one of the languages that is important and only slightly fewer also added English to their list. The third most named language, Kiswahili, followed by a considerable distance; as only slightly more than half of the respondents thought it was an important language. Only approximately a quarter of the participants also considered Lango or Luganda to be an important language.

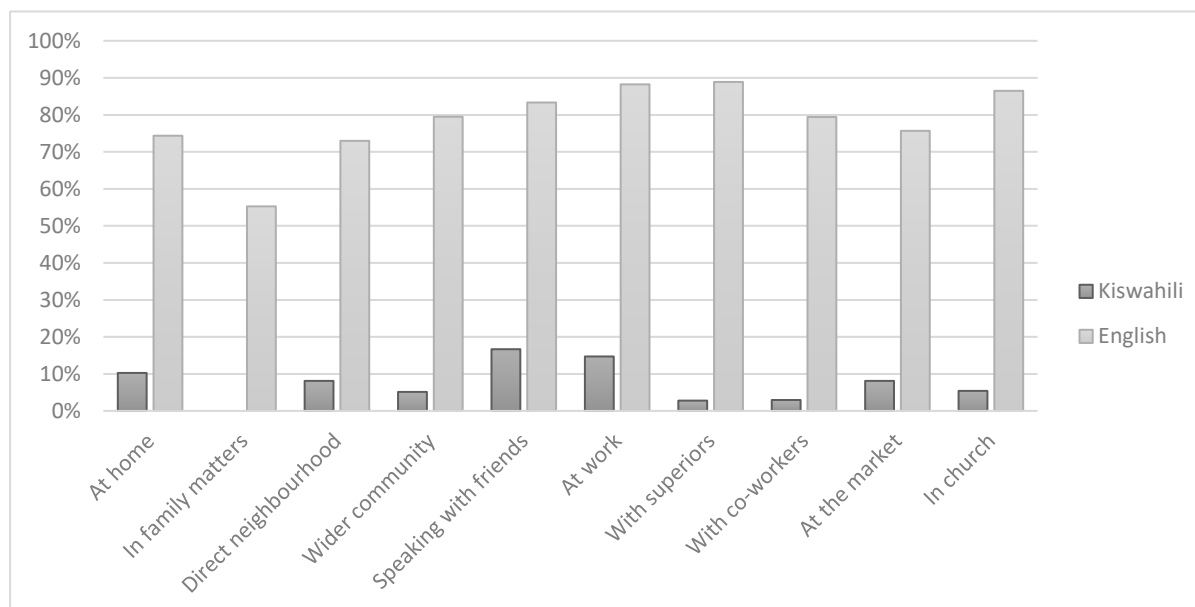
Figure 5: Ranking the three most important languages



Overall, Acoli was clearly perceived as the foremost language, English the second and Kiswahili was understood to be the third most important language. Only around 23% of the respondents did not put Acoli in first position, while English was the clear choice for the second most important language. Kiswahili was also the one placed in the third position by the majority, even though Lango and Luganda both received recognition as well.

6.2 Use of Kiswahili in everyday contexts

Besides asking the participants for their attitudes towards languages and their use in official contexts, the public sphere and in education, the study also included questions about which languages are used in certain domains, contexts and activities, and the participants' related preferences. The questions were derived from studies by Mann & Pirbhai-Illich (2007) and Borlongan (2009) on language use and preference in Malaysia and Singapore; excluding their exploration of language in various media types. Their approach was chosen for the specific differentiation between 'languages used' and 'language preferred'; enabling a simultaneous exploration of the multilingual character of a context and the participants' subsequent attitudes. The original intention of this section was to identify the role given to English, in comparison to the roles given to the various local languages and, in particular, Acoli. As the participants were allowed to list multiple languages that were used in the given contexts and domains, Kiswahili also appeared several times. However, unlike English, Kiswahili was named only once as a preferred language choice for a specific context of domain. Therefore, only the answers to language use are being considered here.

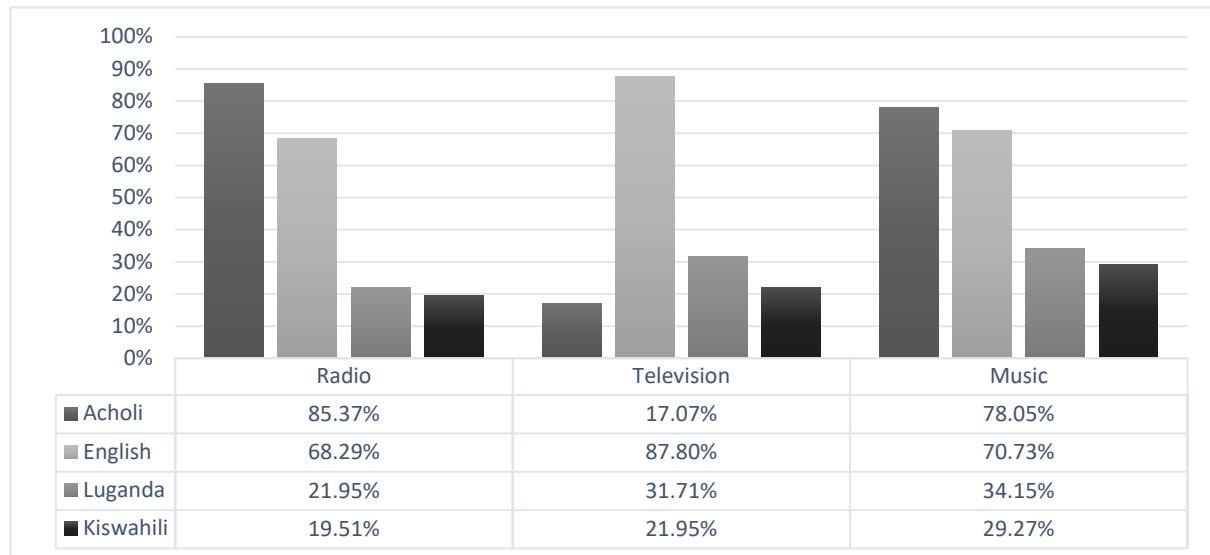
Figure 6: Use of Kiswahili in selected contexts (compared to English)

The study showed that, unlike English, which played a prominent role in all the considered contexts, especially in work related scenarios, Kiswahili played barely any role in the participants' everyday communication. This includes communication in their direct neighbourhoods, within the wider community and at the market; all contexts where one would expect a lingua franca of considerable importance to appear.

6.3 Kiswahili in the media

As previously mentioned, the media is understood by many to be a key part of the promotion of Kiswahili use within the region. In the Ugandan media landscape, Kiswahili is mostly used in broadcasting, for instance in news programs on UBC TV; the national broadcasting service headed by the Ugandan Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. There are also several radio stations that broadcast in Kiswahili across the country. Furthermore, Kiswahili has a long tradition of being used in Ugandan music, with the popular musician, Jose Chameleone, being the most prominent example. To control the position that several relevant languages, including Kiswahili, have in the participants' media consumption, the study asked them to name the languages in which they would usually consume various forms of media. For this question "What role does Kiswahili currently play in the Ugandan media landscape?", the focus remained on traditional types of media; broadly understood as non-digital forms of information and entertainment.

Figure 7: Languages media are consumed in (n=41)



Compared to the languages which were considered the most important in the media of Gulu, Kiswahili was the least frequently named. Nonetheless, there was a considerable minority of participants that said they would, at times, consume Kiswahili radio or television programs. However, while it was expected that compared to English television and Acholi radio consumption, Kiswahili would be given a lesser role, it was surprising to see that it also fell behind Luganda in all three contexts. This result needs to be viewed in the context of recent developments in the Ugandan media landscape. Over the past years, several channels have increasingly included programming using Luganda; for the news, interviews, political discussions and even some TV series.

7. Conclusion: The current role of Kiswahili

In the language ecology of the participants in the study, but also pertaining to the overall state of the country, Kiswahili has a rather limited role (apart from certain regions like those bordering Kenya or the DRC). In the contexts and domains restricted to the personal, local or even regional sphere, Kiswahili appears to stand behind not only English, but also Luganda in importance. In Gulu, the regional centre of Northern Uganda, English has clearly taken the role as the dominant lingua franca and even begun to morph into a secondary first language, with an increasing number of people starting to use it at home and with their children (see Mohr, Lorenz and Ochieng forthcoming). Also, provided that the introduction of local languages in primary education is successful in its explicit goal of improving English language literacy, along with other policies intended to improve educational standards, it can be assumed that the role of English, as the country's primary lingua franca, will be further extended.

The study showed that, in this context, Kiswahili was not positioned in competition with English for the role as the primary lingua franca, but instead occupied a position similar to Luganda as the secondary lingua franca in Gulu. Both languages have a similar number of speakers with comparable proficiencies and also appear to be preferred in the same contexts. There was only a small variation in the general attitudes towards both languages, which can also be expected to further shrink as – especially among younger people – Luganda has gained popularity. The study also indicated a connection between having lived in Kampala or Central Uganda and holding positive attitudes towards the language originating from this region. The capital carries tremendous weight in the educational system, as it is home to the largest universities as well as many prestigious private schools. It dominates large parts of the economy, where it is estimated to account for more than half of the country's GDP (Kisa 2018). In the media it is home to many of the most important outlets. This strong position of the capital in the social-ecological system of Uganda functions as the foundation for the further establishment of Luganda. One example for this is that Luganda appears to have become more prominent in the media over the past years, as television channels have adjusted their programming to the growing number of people speaking Luganda, including many who are not ethnic Baganda.

Nonetheless, the study showed that Kiswahili was, at least in principle, given an important role within the language ecology of Gulu. It was viewed as the third most important language in public communication behind Acholi and English and received overwhelming approval for its status as the second official language, while the general attitudes towards it were rather positive. It can also be assumed that Kiswahili's position as the third, or in some places second, most important language and its generally positive public image, can be found in many, if not most, parts of the country. In the context of Gulu, the only question is in which domains the language is of most practical value and what roles it plays as a lingua franca. For the regions bordering Kenya or the DRC, this would obviously be less of an issue.

Through interviews and conversations it was possible to identify several relevant language ideologies or discourses concerning the attitudes towards Kiswahili, as well as its practical application in everyday communication. This included people recognising the importance of Kiswahili as the language of East Africa that is used for communication across the borders of the EAC, which demonstrated a general awareness for its role in the process of East African integration. These statements were more commonly found among younger people with an above average level of education. They were also particularly prevalent among individuals who had personally moved into another East African country and experienced its heightened role in those areas and those with a stronger interest in politics and economics. The role of Kiswahili in the violent regime of Idi Amin, portrayed by some as a hindrance to the introduction of Kiswahili as a compulsory subject in Ugandan education (Agiresaasi 2017), was not identified as a topic of discussion. This came as somewhat a surprise, as it was still

possible to detect strong negative attitudes towards the Nubi people and their ethnic language; a muslim minority that attained a prominent position in the military during that time. Kiswahili, on the other hand, has retained the status of a neutral language; underlined by the attitude scores given by participants in the quantitative study.

Among the older interviewees, Kiswahili was often connected with its function as a lingua franca, as it was more commonly used prior to the educationally based spread of English. Overall, the use of Kiswahili in the military has not led to any negative attitudes, possibly as the Acholi themselves were historically strongly involved in the Ugandan military apparatus. The negative attitudes towards the military operations during the insurgencies of the 1990s and early 2000s were, instead, more likely to be directed towards the Baganda and Banyankore ethnic groups and their respective ethnic languages.

Following the analysis of the study, it seems that the biggest challenge facing the improvement of Kiswahili's status in Uganda is mainly rooted in its lack of relevance in everyday communication. The participants demonstrated positive attitudes towards Kiswahili in general and as an official language of Uganda but found only limited use for it. Even though a considerable number of the participants claimed to have some form of competence in Kiswahili, their self-assessed proficiency was remarkably low. It can be hypothesized that increased efforts to implement Kiswahili in the school curricula could lead to improved levels of proficiency, but it can equally be assumed that the lack of relevance will remain a hindrance to these efforts. The increased importance of Luganda, especially, and other local languages such as Acholi, combined with general improvements in English competence (due to overall efforts to improving literacy in English) could lessen the individual's interest in acquiring adequate proficiency in a language that is not considered vital to one's ability to succeed in their environment. It appears that especially in contexts where a lingua franca is expected to be most commonly used, in public spaces like markets, small businesses or the church, Kiswahili was barely present. Instead, in cases where the local language Acholi was not sufficient, English was usually the language of choice.

The cases where Kiswahili was used usually included people who originated from outside Uganda and had not received extended formal education, for instance people coming from the DRC or soldiers stationed in or around Gulu. However, such cases remained rather uncommon. One example that showed the demographic of Gulu Kiswahili speakers, and the issues they face, was the struggle of the local parish of the Catholic Church to establish a service on Sundays which would either be held in Kiswahili or have a translator present. Two reasons for that were that the number of potential attendees within the large Catholic community was not significant enough to justify the inception of a service specifically targeting people who could neither speak Acholi nor English, and the lack of potential translators who had sufficient skills in Kiswahili and either of the languages (Acholi and English) spoken by the priests of the parish. Kiswahili was, however, used for prayer with the

inmates of the local prison, who often originated from places outside Northern Uganda and were less likely to have received extended formal education.

It appears equally problematic that in the media and the business sphere, which Kawoja & Makokha (2009) and Mukuthuria (2006) identified as key sectors for the promotion of Kiswahili, both English and Luganda are seemingly on the rise. This suggests that, instead of an increase in the importance of Kiswahili over the last one and a half decade, it rather appears that English and Luganda are further manifesting their presence. Combined with the uncertainty of whether the introduction of Kiswahili in the education system would actually lead to a higher level of proficiency and use, it seems doubtful that the planned, or already implemented policies intended to promote the language, will be sufficiently successful.

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